This doc is combination of #276 & 562

276 MD 90

or five Americ[illegible] incredible job [illegible] of several *hundred thousand* [illegible] "Pop" was [illegible] scrounger. Another cogent argument for Seabees and marines!

Next, the difficult problem of the CIU's effective employment must be considered. Counter[illegible] active insurgencies almost [illegible] governments which [illegible] popular support. Unfortunately we can't pick and choose, so the potential target must have weaknesses which the Communists have been exploiting in the past, particularly [illegible] Vietnam, Cambodia, we [illegible] and serious efforts to [illegible] approach. As Castro points out in Vietnam, we [illegible] failure with more carrots!

On the other hand, [illegible] details, we have to [illegible] our patient alive while [illegible] Return which destroys [illegible] Communist power base without [illegible] during the transition [illegible] can result in the [illegible] but now [illegible] ists in Iran. Before we begin prescribing medicine to cure a [illegible] country illness, we had better [illegible] reasonably certain it won't [illegible] the country as well. In most cases [illegible] will be limited, but they [illegible] exist. This enters the carrot and [illegible] The host country must agree [illegible] programs or actions [illegible] deemed the minimum necessary [illegible] allow a counterinsurgency program to become effective. These measures will produce [illegible] exist but are ignored [illegible] at best, but managed. In this [illegible] our Communist enemy will [illegible] provide us with chapter and verse [illegible] his propaganda literature.

It has been my experience that [illegible] relatively minor personnel changes—[illegible] ing corrupt [illegible] incompetent officials—can work wonders. This stick comes in [illegible] denials happen to be the prime [illegible] relations. Distasteful as it may be, sending [illegible] people off to [illegible] is usually a cheap carrot.

Once [illegible] at least initially [illegible] number of [illegible] U. S. [illegible] than [illegible] the [illegible] U. S. ambassador. The CinCs, however, can prevent the CIU from being misused by an ambassador as a new toy or frustrated by an ambassador's refusing to apply NSC-directed carrots and sticks as appropriate. Other U. S. agencies may also resent the "new boys" for any number of reasons, but the CIU commander's direct line to his CinC should soon resolve these situations as well.

I firmly believe that an organization like the CIU, placed directly under a CinC and buttressed by a calculated carrot and stick approach, would give the United States an effective counterinsurgency weapon, and our "lessons bought in blood" in Vietnam can be applied to the future.

"Survivability—A Science Whose Time Has Come"

(See C. N. Sapp, pp. 58-67, December 1978 Proceedings)

George Chernowitz, American Power Jet Company—Survivability involves numerous design details which are not readily specified at the early stages of acquisition. Rather, it is an objective which must be made a part of the design and the ongoing design-review process.

As an illustration, our company was engaged in work on survivability in the post-World War II/Korea era. It was argued at the time that jets were much more vulnerable than piston engines. (This was actually used as one of the arguments against their early adoption for tactical air!) The results of tests seemed to confirm this until we did a detailed analysis which showed this "vulnerability" was entirely related to the way in which fuel lines and controls were closely grouped and unprotected. The simple addition of a strong protective tube made all the difference, eliminating this type of cheap kill.

Commander Sapp's objectives can be advanced in a single stroke by getting survivability included as a specific "call out" in the acquisition reg[illegible] process. Similar approaches in the areas of reliability and maintenance are bearing fruit.

"The Violation of the 'Liberty'"

(See R. K. Smith, pp. 62-70, June 1978; S. C. Truver, pp. 91-93, September 1978; N. Polmar, p. 88, October 1978; Y. Nitzan, pp. 111-113, November 1978; V. L. Brownfield and P. E. Tobin, pp. 104-107, December 1978; W. L. McGonagle and A. Friendly, p. 88, January 1979; D. Tapp, p. 86, February 1979; D. H. Robinson, pp. 90-91, June 1979 Proceedings)

Frank G. McGuire, Editor, Helicopter News—As an editor of specialized periodicals dealing with helicopters and lighter-than-air vehicles, I normally would not become involved in the events surrounding the attack upon the USS *Liberty* (AGTR-5). Nonetheless, I did by accident play a small role in this episode long after the fact, and your readers should know about that.

In May 1978, I was preparing for a trip to Israel as part of a group from the Aviation/Space Writers Association invited by the Israeli Government. As it so happened, one of the pieces of mail I received during those last few pre-trip days in the office was an advance proof copy of an article scheduled to appear in the June 1978 *Proceedings*. It dealt with the installation of helicopter landing decks on hydrofoil vessels, and accompanying this was the table of contents page for that same issue in case something else should be of interest.

What was of interest was the reference to an article concerning the attack on the *Liberty*. In view of my impending trip, I telephoned the *Proceedings* offices and requested a copy of Dr. Smith's article.

I read the article on the plane en route to Tel Aviv, with no more than the intention of filing the information mentally. Until, that is, one portion of the article caught my eye:

> "Although the United States submitted a claim of $7,644,146 for the material damage inflicted upon the *Liberty*, the government of Israel has refused to pay it."

Whatever the other aspects of the incident, this did not seem right. If the claim was valid, why did the Israelis—a friendly nation—not pay it and clear the record? If the claim was not valid, why wasn't it?

One of the privileges of journalists

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is the oft-presented opportunity to ask questions of government officials directly, on behalf of the journalist's readers. On our group's schedule was a meeting with Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman. I decided to ask him.

Journalists facing any nation's defense minister in front of a battery of television lights are vulnerable to as much stage fright as anyone else, however, and until I actually heard myself speaking I could not have guaranteed that I would ask that provocative question, nor that I would not fumble it badly.

The United States was at that time arranging to transfer F-15 jet fighters to Israel (the only nation outside the United States to operate this aircraft at the time), and the relatively new government of Prime Minister Begin was in power.

We had the scheduled press conference on 5 June 1978 with Defense Minister Weizman in a dining room of the Tel Aviv Hilton. There were several dozen U. S. journalists in the room, as well as an undetermined number of Israeli journalists and others.

In a short preliminary talk, the personable and articulate Weizman referred to the fact that it was just 11 years since the Six-Day War. He recapped the aviation history of Israel, expressing the hope that eventually aviation would become a more constructive influence in the Middle East than its past uses had indicated.

Subsequent questions from the press centered about the role of U. S. aircraft and equipment in Middle East conflicts, what countermeasures were being taken against Soviet-designed surface-to-air missiles, and similar topics.

I should have prepared my question in writing for my own use, but neglected to do so, and posed it *ad lib.* My cassette tape recorder was operating throughout the exchange, and the following is taken unedited from the tape:

"My name is Frank McGuire with Kimberly Communications. The United States Naval Institute *Proceedings* . . . is about to publish an article going into considerable detail on the attack on the USS *Liberty* which Israeli forces carried out."

At this point, the tape recorder preserves a general outburst of "Oh, my God . . ." and other exclamations from those in the room, there being no way of telling if this distress was coming from the Israelis or their guests. Weizman's voice is clear, however, saying: "Oh, my aching back. You're going back that far?"

UPI

Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman

After pausing as a result of the commotion, I continued:

". . . in 1967. They are about to publish the article this month. The magazine makes a point of noting that the Israeli Government has refused to pay a claim that the United States Government has against it of seven-some million dollars. Do you have any expectation that this will be settled, in view of the friendship aspects or the F-15 package, or anything like that?"

Weizman at this point can be heard saying: "Oh, my God . . ." and my own voice continuing: "It is obviously going to rankle American military people with this fresh publication."

Weizman hardly hesitated before replying.

"My good friend . . . first of all, this is a real knocker. A real surprise. [Some uncertain laughter from others in the room.] We have inherited . . . you know, we are in office only a year. And we have inherited a government that lasted 29 years. We have inherited lots of things. I, by now, have found out certain things that I did not know.

"I can tell you one thing: we did not inherit this . . . and if we did, I haven't heard about it. [Much laughter.] And it could be that . . . well, I hope that they settled all their accounts with the U. S. Government before they were kicked out of office.

"If not, I think that we'll sit down with the Treasury and talk if things pop up again. In my year of office, and having been to Washington once and seen the Secretary of State of the United States more than once, I never had an account pushed on my desk, and if it comes along we'll take it with due respect, as we take everything that comes on our desk from the United States Government."

That was the end of the exchange.

There are some things, of course, that a tape recorder transcript does not reveal, and so I will note that Weizman's reply was not couched in hostile terms by any means and was, in fact, far more gracious than replies I have had from U. S. military officers and government officials to whom I have posed equally valid and provocative questions. These things always hinge, it is said, on whose ox is being gored.

As for publication of the exchange, if any articles concerning this question or Mr. Weizman's reply appeared in print, I have never seen them. I had assumed at the time that representatives from the U. S. embassy in Israel were present and would be aware of the question and of the Israeli Government's implied position concerning the unsettled claim. From this assumption, I also concluded that the information would be passed through interested services, i.e., the naval attaché, and eventually to the offices of the *Proceedings*.

Since it appears that this flow of information did not occur as I had assumed, and my tape recorded version of the exchange sat here unpublished for nearly a year, I owe the readers of the *Proceedings* an apology (and possibly Mr. Weizman as well) for being negligent.

United States Naval Institute

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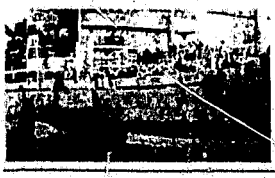

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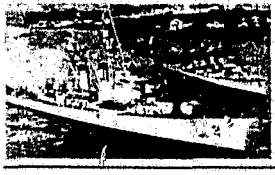
By Richard K. Smith



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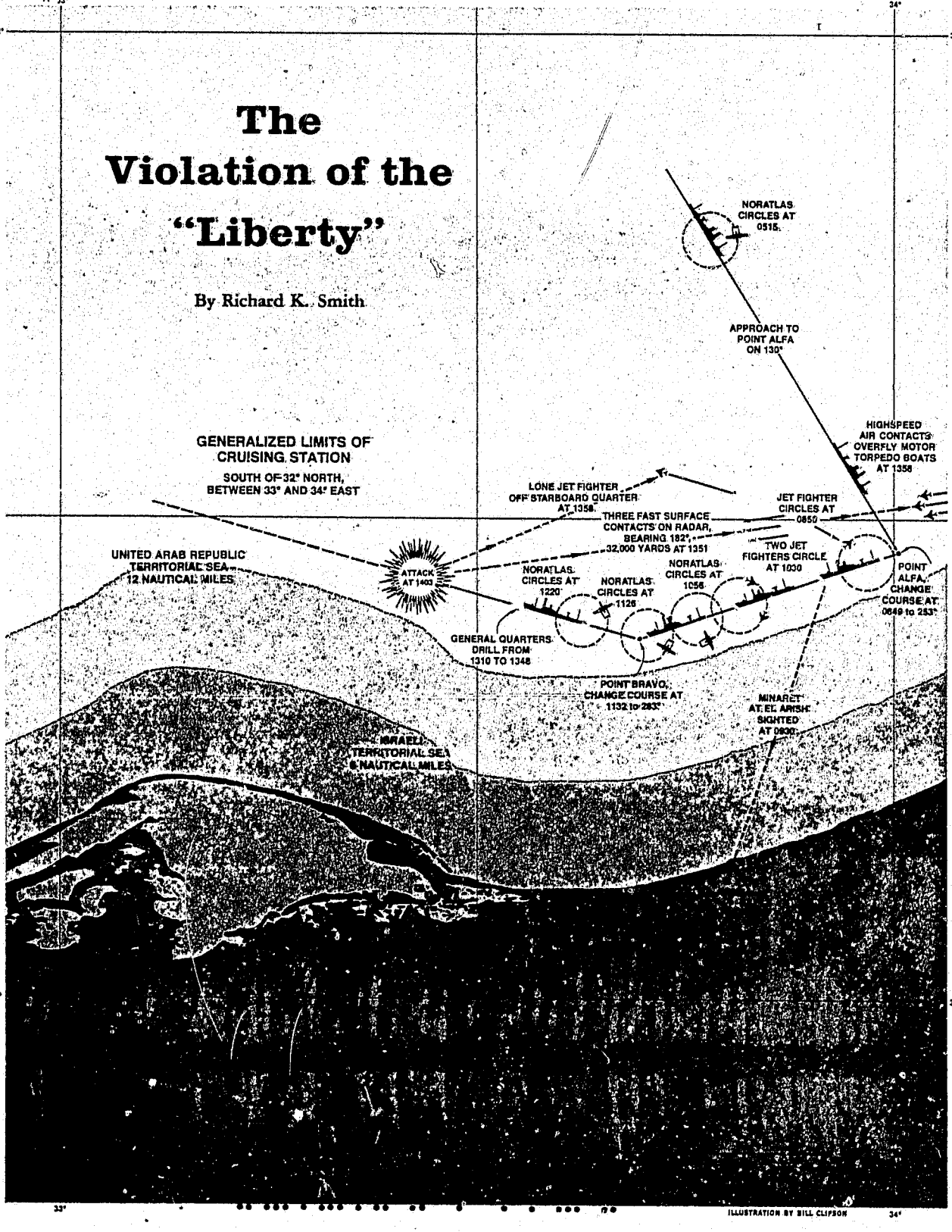
The Violation of the "Liberty"

By Richard K. Smith


32°
33°
34°
31°
NORATLAS CIRCLES AT 0515.
APPROACH TO POINT ALFA ON 130°
HIGHSPEED AIR CONTACTS OVERFLY MOTOR TORPEDO BOATS AT 1358
GENERALIZED LIMITS OF CRUISING STATION
SOUTH OF 32° NORTH, BETWEEN 33° AND 34° EAST
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THREE FAST SURFACE CONTACTS ON RADAR, BEARING 182°, 32,000 YARDS AT 1351
JET FIGHTER CIRCLES AT 0859
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UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC TERRITORIAL SEA 12 NAUTICAL MILES
ATTACK AT 1403
NORATLAS CIRCLES AT 1220
NORATLAS CIRCLES AT 1126
NORATLAS CIRCLES AT 1056
POINT ALFA, CHANGE COURSE AT 0649 to 253°
GENERAL QUARTERS DRILL FROM 1310 TO 1348
POINT BRAVO, CHANGE COURSE AT 1132 to 283°
MINARET AT EL ARISH SIGHTED AT 0930
ISRAELI TERRITORIAL SEA 6 NAUTICAL MILES
ILLUSTRATION BY BILL CLIPSON

of 2 June and during the next five days made her best speed (17 knots) for the Eastern Mediterranean. While the *Liberty* was steaming off the south coast of Sicily on the morning of 5 June, Israel launched preemptive air strikes against the air forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and destroyed them on the ground. At the same time, Israeli ground forces invaded the Sinai and swept westward to occupy the east bank of the Suez Canal. This was the third Arab-Israeli War in 20 years. It lasted six days, ending in a cease-fire to which Israel agreed with great reluctance.

A vital part of Israel's war plan was preventing the rest of the world from knowing about its military victories until they could be presented together as a political *fait accompli*. After two or three days, this news blackout created great anxieties among the civilian population of Israel, but it was more important to keep foreign powers in the dark. The Israeli leaders feared superpower pressures for a cease-fire before they could seize the territory which they considered necessary for Israel's future security.[4] Any instrument which sought to penetrate this smoke screen so carefully thrown around the normal "fog of war" would have to be frustrated.

At about 0300 on 8 June, the fourth day of the war, the *Liberty* arrived on her designated station which was bounded by 33° and 34° East longitude, by the 32nd parallel to the north. As for the southern boundary, Egypt claimed a territorial sea of 12 miles, Israel only 6 miles, so the *Liberty* had orders to approach no closer to shore than 12.5 and 6.5 miles respectively. From the center of this cruising station, an arc of 250 miles encompasses Damascus, most of Jordan and the Sinai peninsula, all of the Nile delta including Cairo, and all of Israel. In her first hours on station, the *Liberty* was moving inshore toward the coastal town of El Arish to obtain visual bearings which would allow her to retire with accuracy to a more discreet distance.

In their blitzkrieg of 5 June, the Israelis had used "dibber" bombs to crater the paved runways of Arab air bases and thus render them unusable. The runways at El Arish were spared because the Israelis planned to overrun the base and use it themselves. By the time the *Liberty* arrived, the former Egyptian airfield, which is inland from the sea, was functioning as an advanced Israeli air base.[5]

Shortly after daybreak on 8 June, the *Liberty*'s combat information center reported a slow-moving air contact on radar to Ensign John D. Scott, the officer of the deck. Around 0515, he watched the airplane circle the *Liberty* three times and fly away toward Tel Aviv.[6] The airplane was a French-built Nord 2501 Noratlas transport. Until President Charles de Gaulle imposed a Middle East arms embargo on the eve of the Six-Day War, France was Israel's principal supplier of military hardware. The Israeli Air Force operated a dozen Noratlases. A twin-engine cargo plane with its tail group carried on twin booms similar to an American C-119 "flying boxcar," it was distinctive to the eye even at great distances. In the Six-Day War, the Israelis employed their Noratlases not only in troop carrying and battlefield resupply but also in maritime reconnaissance.[7]

Meanwhile, the engine room called for permission to blow soot from the boiler tubes. Ensign Scott went out on a wing of the bridge to look at the flag in order to determine the wind's direction and force. The flag, a standard ensign of 5 by 8 feet, was flying from one of the starboard halyards of the huge steel tripod mast which towered like an oil driller's derrick almost 100 feet above the flying bridge. At 0553, Scott changed course to 190° and gave permission to blow tubes.

At the moment of the *Liberty*'s course change, it was 0353 Zulu (Greenwich Mean Time) in U.S. military command posts the world over and 2353 Eastern Daylight Time on 7 June in Washington, D.C., where the position of the *Liberty* had been of some concern for at least five hours. At 2350Z (1950 EDT), more than five hours before the *Liberty* arrived off El Arish, an officer of the Joint Reconnaissance Center in Washington phoned the headquarters of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe (CinCUSNavEur) in London with an oral order to have the *Liberty* stay clear of the coasts of Egypt, Israel, and Syria by 100 miles. The telephone order was followed up by a message from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

There was nothing extraordinary in this, because earlier on 7 June, Commander Sixth Fleet, acting upon orders from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ordered that all of his units should stay clear of belligerent territory by 100 miles. This order was a political reaction to the Egyptian accusation that Sixth Fleet aircraft had participated in the Israeli air strikes of 5 June. Because the *Liberty* might be understood—or misunderstood—to be an exception to this order, it was felt necessary to be certain she was included. Although the ship might prove to be a minor political embarrassment, no one imagined she was in danger.

At 0800, the watch changed. At 0850, a jet fighter circled the ship and headed off toward shore. At 1030, two jet fighters circled the ship twice and flew off toward the south. The jet planes were flying high enough that their national markings could not be seen, but ever since the morning of 5 June the skies over Sinai had been the exclusive property of

checked the ship's position by radar. She was heading 283°, a shade north of due west, as she had been since 1132. The *Liberty* was 14 miles off the shoreline. At 1400, lookouts reported jet aircraft to the north, and the captain went out on the starboard wing for a look with his binoculars. There was a single jet fighter about 5 miles off the starboard quarter at 5,000 feet and paralleling the track of the ship.

The airplane did not appear menacing, but the captain was uneasy. He called to Lieutenant (junior grade) Lloyd C. Painter, the officer of the deck, "You'd better call the forward gun mounts." The guns were not fully manned, but lookouts were being kept at the stations. Meanwhile, Ensign Malcolm O'Malley, the junior officer of the deck, was searching the fringes of the radar screen for a distinct bearing on the low and almost featureless shoreline when fast-moving contacts rushed onto the screen at 082°. He reported, "Lloyd, I think I have three contacts here . . ." But Painter was looking through one of the forward portholes on the bridge and cranking a telephone, trying to alert men on the forecastle gun mounts. Because of peculiarities in the telephone circuit, this exercise was always frustrating.

In this same moment, Commander Sixth Fleet's message ordering the *Liberty* to move offshore by 100 miles had just arrived at the U.S. Defense Communications System's radio station near Asmara, Ethiopia, and was about to be retransmitted to the Naval Communications Station in Greece for relay to the ship. It was a message that did not arrive aboard the *Liberty* until 10 June, when it was hand-delivered to the captain at Malta.[9]

On board the *Liberty*, most attention was focused on the "decoy" jet fighter cruising to starboard. Painter was still trying to "crank up" the gun stations. O'Malley was watching the three fast surface contacts when he saw additional high-speed "targets" rush onto the screen, pass over the original contacts, and speed toward the center of his radar display. The new blips which seized O'Malley's eyes were jet planes moving at almost 9 miles per minute, dashing in at masthead height from astern.

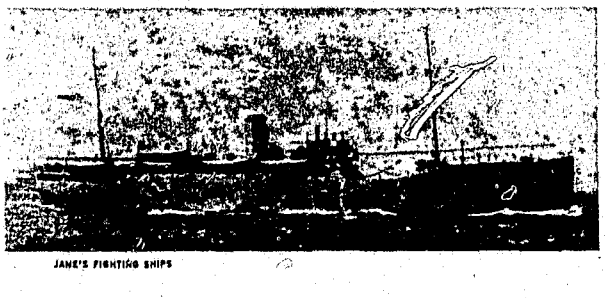
Before O'Malley could utter a word, a terrific explosion shook the port side of the bridge from amidships. Painter was looking directly at the starboard gun mount when it erupted in a flash and disappeared in a cloud of smoke. In the same instant, everything on the bridge seemed to dissolve into ripples of boom-boom-boom-boom-boom as dozens of rockets ripped through the deckhouse. Commander J. Gonagle ran in from the wing of the bridge, hit the general quarters alarm, and called the crew to battle stations over the general announcing system. Then he lunged across the wheelhouse to jangle the engine order telegraph to full ahead, then flank speed.

The air attack battered its way through the ship from 1403 to 1410. The planes crisscrossed the ship about every 45 seconds, first with rockets and napalm, then strafing. One napalm container hit the port side. Two others were seen to miss the ship and fall into the sea, and it may be presumed that others were dropped and missed. The airplanes were French-built Dassault Super-Mystère B.2 fighter-bombers, which possessed a supersonic dash capability and were similar in performance to the U.S. Air Force F-100. Armed for a low-level attack mission, each could carry about two dozen large-caliber unguided rockets. When the rockets were expended, each plane had two 30-mm. cannon to bring to bear. Trained to attack small, maneuverable targets such as tanks and armored vehicles, it was with the greatest ease that the Israeli pilots butchered the large, slow-moving, and defenseless *Liberty*.

The Israeli aircraft ordnance, designed to penetrate the armor of tanks, punched right through the *Liberty*'s 22-year-old shell plating. Ripping through two or three bulkheads and into the heart of the ship's living spaces, the projectiles exploded in compartments and passageways with devastating effects upon human flesh. When examined in a shipyard, the *Liberty* was found to have 821 holes large enough for a man's fist, and 164 of these were in the vicinity of the bridge. Besides these holes there was fragmentation damage which exceeded reasonable count.

The seven-minute air attack left eight men dead or dying and more than 100 wounded, 50 of them seriously enough that they were completely out of action. And the ship was afire at three different points. In the first 60 seconds, the ship's executive officer and operations officer were killed, and all of the senior deck officers were put out of action. The helmsman on watch was seriously wounded, and the man who replaced him was killed. The third helmsman, although wounded, managed to remain at his station until the end of the attacks.

The radar was shot away, and combat information center was useless. Most of the ship's radio transmitting equipment was badly shot up or put in temporary disarray. The antenna systems were badly damaged. The interior communications room was a shambles. The only internal communications working were the sound-powered telephones, and not all of those circuits were undamaged. Worst of all, the gyro compass was shot away, leaving only a jittery magnetic compass, and the rudder angle indicator



JANE'S FIGHTING SHIPS

U. S. NAVY

After the attack on the Liberty, *above, the Israelis claimed they mistakenly thought their target was the Egyptian* El Quseir, *a much smaller, much older Egyptian vessel, shown at left in a photo taken when she was a transport called* El Amira Fawzia.

Israel. At 1056, the Noratlas appeared again and flew four slow circles around the *Liberty*. It reappeared overhead at 1126 and again at 1220. Lieutenant James G. Ennes, officer of the deck, noted that on each overflight it circled for about ten minutes and did not make any attempt to signal the *Liberty*.

Meanwhile, at 1117, Commander Sixth Fleet, acting upon the orders of CinCUSNavEur and the JCS, had prepared the message for the *Liberty* which directed her to move 100 miles offshore.

During the lunch hour, most of the off-watch officers and crew spread themselves around the decks to soak up a bit of sun. Lieutenant George H. Golden, the chief engineer, was lying in a deck chair from which he watched the Noratlas fly directly overhead. Assuming that the crewmen of the Israeli aircraft were looking down at the *Liberty* in these moments, what they saw was a large merchant ship, its decks littered with a hundred or more half-naked bodies staring sightlessly at the sky. It was not a scene that suggested menace. The chief engineer's eye also inspected his stack for smoke and caught on the flag flying from the bridge mast. At lunch Golden had remarked to Lieutenant (junior grade) Malcolm Watson that he wished they were flying their 7 by 13-foot holiday ensign which provided twice the area for identification.

The *Liberty* carried more conspicuous identification than her national ensign. Victory-type hulls festooned with antennae were rare commodities, limited to the *Liberty* and her sister USS *Belmont* (AGTR-4). And the big "GTR 5" painted on her bows and the sides of her stern was unique among the world's ships. Very few of the world's navies paint the "pennant" numbers of their ships on bows and stern, much less with white paint backed up by black shading to accentuate the white.[8] The numeral "5" on the *Liberty*'s bows was almost 10 feet tall, freshly painted only a few weeks before and quite distinctive at distances between one or two miles in good visibility. And on this day off El Arish the visibility was excellent.

Lieutenant Golden's mind turned to the general quarters drill the captain had planned for after the lunch hour. Commander McGonagle was well aware that his ship's assignment to the Eastern Mediterranean posed significantly greater hazards than the cruising conditions off somnolent West Africa. The *Liberty*'s "armament" was only a token of the expression. It consisted of four .50-caliber machine guns, two on the forecastle and two aft of the deckhouse. They were on open mounts which did not even have splinter shields.

The *Liberty*'s only real defense was effective damage control. On 5 June, the day the Arab-Israeli War began, the captain circulated a memo among his bridge and combat information center personnel which emphasized that ". . . maximum effort must be made to minimize personnel/material damage, safeguard the watertight integrity of the ship, and continue performance of primary mission." And he added, ". . . it is better to set GQ [general quarters] in doubtful cases than to be taken by surprise; take immediate action as may be required by the situation, then advise me of what steps have been taken."

At 1310, the *Liberty*'s general announcing system sounded with "This is a drill! This is a drill! General Quarters! All hands man your battle stations . . ." This was the *Liberty*'s third GQ drill within four days. All aspects of the drill went well except that it took four minutes and 45 seconds to set Condition Zebra, the ship's maximum condition of watertightness. Commander McGonagle regarded this as excessive and gave his crew members a brief lecture over the announcing system. He called their attention to a great tower of oily black smoke boiling up into the brilliantly blue sky about 20 miles west of El Arish. It was grim evidence that their ship was in a potentially dangerous location. He insisted that they had to be a team of "heads-up ball players."

The GQ drill was secured at 1350. The captain

U. S. NAVY

Commander William McGonagle, commanding officer of the Liberty, *points out some of the topside damage caused by the Israeli air strike on his ship. Inset: Following promotion to captain, McGonagle was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1968.*

sist a new parade of bloodied men with broken bones, collapsed lungs, and blown-out ear membranes to the dressing stations on the upper decks. And in the engine room machinist's mates and boilermen labored by flashlight to make their plant come alive again.

Meanwhile, the torpedo boats broke off from attack and retreated astern of the *Liberty* as if waiting for the curtain to go up on a third act of the attack. At this moment, the curtain had indeed gone up on a new act. During the attacks, the *Liberty*'s radio operators had labored at great hazard to their lives to get off a message report of the ship's ordeal. The ship's own radio communications were wholly separate from the complex of "mission-oriented" systems below decks. The *Liberty*'s radiomen worked in a radio central which had one of the biggest fires on the ship burning on the weather deck outside, and one bulkhead of their compartment was untouchably hot. The air attacks had damaged their main transmitter. An auxiliary had to be cut in and tuned. Antennae had to be repaired. Meanwhile, rockets and 30-mm. shells were bursting around the radiomen.

When transmissions became possible, they were sent against intense jamming.[10] In spite of this, by 1420 the *Liberty*'s operators had gotten off an attack message to the Sixth Fleet. By 1430, there was enough of a surge in the fleet's radio traffic to suggest to anyone monitoring those frequencies that something unusual had happened. The carrier *America* (CVA-66) launched four A-4 Skyhawks armed with Bullpup missiles, the *Saratoga* (CVA-60) launched four attack planes with a fighter cover, and both carriers launched a cloud of F-4B Phantoms to cover the fleet just in case. The pilots flying to the *Liberty*'s assistance were "authorized to use force including destruction as necessary."

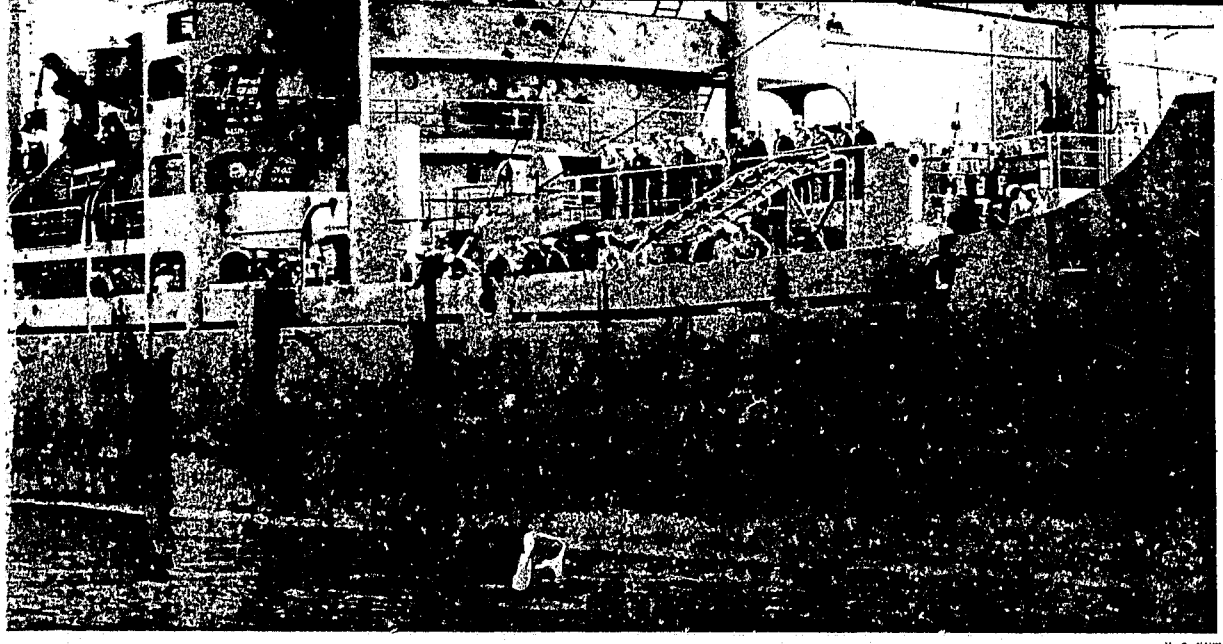
At the time that the alarm was ringing through the Sixth Fleet, the Israelis hurried into diplomatic channels to announce their mistake. The Sixth Fleet's airplanes were recalled. At 1503, one of the Israeli motor torpedo boats came abeam of the *Liberty* and signaled in English: "Do you need assistance?" The printed record says the *Liberty* replied "negative" or "no thank you." Other sources say that Commander McGonagle leaned over the wing of his bridge and shouted *"Go to Hell!"*[11]

Within four minutes of this exchange, two French-built Sud 321 Super-Frelon troop-carrying helicopters appeared alongside the *Liberty*, straddling the ship to port and starboard, one forward and the other aft. And two jet fighters were seen loitering astern of the ship, as if on call for a second strike. The helicopters hovered as if they did not know what to do next—as if they had missed their cue. They were not there for rescue service; they were carrying armed troops. Neither machine attempted to signal the *Liberty*. And as ominously as they had appeared, they mysteriously departed.

The men of the *Liberty* did not know it yet, but the torpedo assault of 1435 was the last attack. Power was regained by 1453, and the *Liberty* limped off to the north at eight knots. She had a 10° list from the tons of water in her flooded communications spaces. Steering had to be done from the emergency station aft and by magnetic compass, both of which were awkward. For more than an hour, the torpedo boats buzzed around the ship, occasionally making threatening high-speed runs on the *Liberty*. From time to time, unidentified jet fighters circled the ship.

At 1841, a Sikorsky S.58 helicopter with Israeli markings approached the ship. Commander Ernest C. Castle, the naval attaché to the U. S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, was on board. He dropped a note and indicated he wanted to come aboard. But under the circumstances this was scant identification, a landing was inexpedient, and Commander McGonagle waved the helicopter away.

The captain continued to conn his ship. At sunset a chair was rigged for him on the port wing of the bridge so he could conn the ship through the night by keeping one eye on her wake and the other on the north star. He could have gone below for detailed medical attention to his wounds, but his ship and his men were more important, and he refused to leave the bridge. At Lieutenant Richard F. Kiepfer, the



U. S. NAVY

The battered Liberty *limps into Valetta, Malta, on 14 June 1967 for temporary repairs following the attack. At the waterline is the hole caused by a torpedo from an Israeli boat. Her hull and superstructure are pockmarked with holes from air attacks.*

mechanism was out of commission. The helmsman could have no idea of how much rudder he was applying. The only instrument on the bridge that still worked was the fathometer. This was fortunate because there was shoal water only a few miles off the port bow.

In those same 60 seconds, Commander McGonagle received an ugly shrapnel wound in his right leg. It spurted blood which transformed the leg of his trousers into a crimson wick which trailed blood across the deck as he rushed from one wing of the bridge to the other, directing firefighting parties through his phone talker, taking photographs of the attacking planes for the record, calling orders to the guns as long as they were manned—and conning his ship.

Ensign David G. Lucas was alarmed by the captain's blood-soaked trouser leg, so he whipped off his belt and applied it as a tourniquet. This took only a minute, and then the captain was up and around again, but with increasing pain and increasing hazard to his well-being. In spite of this grievous wound, Commander McGonagle didn't leave his bridge until after 0700 on 9 June.

The *Liberty* was still fighting fires when, at 1424, three motor torpedo boats were sighted five miles off the starboard quarter. These were the contacts Ensign O'Malley spotted initially at 1401. Commander McGonagle noticed that the Israeli air attacks had shot away the U.S. flag. Signalman Russell O. Davis rigged a new hoist and ran up the big 7 by 13-foot holiday ensign.

At 1428, one of the motor torpedo boats flashed a message to the *Liberty,* but it could not be read because of all the smoke from fires burning on the lower weather decks. In any case, the *Liberty* had no means of reply because the air attacks had destroyed her 24-inch searchlights. There was a 6-inch Aldis lamp on the bridge, but the air attacks had damaged feeders and receptacles on the bridge. Moreover, circuit breakers supplying the bridge had opened, and repair parties had been too busy fighting fires to reset them.

The French-built torpedo boats were of the Israeli *Ayah* class, 62-tonners capable of 42 knots. They bore in on the *Liberty* at high speed and raked her decks with 20-mm. and 40-mm. guns. Four more Americans died in this hail of steel.

At 1431, the captain passed the word over the announcing system: *"Stand by for torpedo attack, starboard side!"* One torpedo was seen to pass 75 yards astern. But at 1435, another torpedo hit the ship in Number 3 hold which was immediately forward of the machinery spaces and enclosed the *Liberty*'s special communications compartments.

Twenty-two Americans died in those communications spaces.

The concussion of the torpedo's explosion knocked open the main circuit breakers in the engine room, and all power was lost. The air attacks had knocked out the emergency diesel generator. The *Liberty* was dead in the water. Below decks, scores of men in damage control parties worked in a stifling darkness to establish flooding boundaries, shore up weakened decks and bulkheads, plug holes and cracks, and as-

after the attack, Israel paid $3,566,457 in compensation to those men who were wounded.[16] This was obtained only after the claimants retained private legal counsel, the latter taking a substantial part of the award. Although the United States submitted a claim of $7,644,146 for the material damage inflicted upon the *Liberty*, the government of Israel has refused to pay it.

The whole Israeli attitude toward the *Liberty* incident has been strangely callous. Americans in Israel at the time of the attack remarked with some surprise that no Israelis of their regular acquaintance saw fit to offer their personal regrets about the unfortunate attack upon the *Liberty*, even by way of offhand conversation.[17] These Israeli attitudes make an interesting contrast to the only comparable incident which has occurred within recent years, the attack upon the USS *Panay* (PR-5) 30 years before.

On 13 December 1937, the gunboat *Panay* was strafed, bombed, and sunk in the Yangtze River by Japanese dive-bombers during the initial weeks of the confused "China Incident" which four years later became an aspect of World War II. Three men, including one civilian, were killed; a dozen were seriously wounded. Many individual Japanese called upon the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo to express their personal regrets; many others telephoned. Japanese schools took up collections for the survivors and next of kin. The admiral in charge of operations in China and the air officer who commanded the squadrons that took part in the attack were relieved of their commands. And Japan remitted its monetary compensation on 22 April 1938, less than five months after the incident.[18]

If there is a timeless lesson to be relearned from the savage violation of the *Liberty* it is that nations do not have "friends." They have only interests. An elementary lecture on this subject was given 182 years ago by George Washington in his farewell address. His words are every bit as valid today as they were in 1796, and perhaps a bit more so. They deserve the review of every American and the special attention of officers serving with the Sixth Fleet.[19] In any given set of circumstances nations are guided to action by what they perceive to best serve their own interests. They do not act in terms of the dreadfully oversimplified caricatures with which Americans and their news media like to personalize and sentimentalize the iron politics among nations.

Whatever euphoric sentiments may seem to be at large in the farrago of foreign relations, the grim fact remains that there is such a thing as *Raison d'Etat*. In a clutch, nations act upon it. Its execution usually leaves hurt feelings. On occasion, it spills blood.

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[1]Except as noted, all data herein are taken from the *Liberty*'s court of inquiry, the testimony, appendices, and exhibits of which run to 600-some pages, and the deck logs of the *Liberty*, *America* (CVA-66), *Saratoga* (CVA-60), *Little Rock* (CLG-4), *Davis* (DD-937), *Massey* (DD-778), and *Papago* (ATF-160).

[2]See J.A. Culver, "A Time for Victories," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1977, pp. 50-56, and especially the extended comment by H.L. Holthaus, September 1977, pp. 87-89.

[3]Raymond V.B. Blackman, editor, *Jane's Fighting Ships: 1965-66* (Great Missenden, Bucks., England: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 394.

[4]Zeev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), pp. 159-160.

[5]"Blasted Arab MiGs Clutter Base in Sinai," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 14 August 1967, pp. 92-93.

[6]Except as noted, all times cited herein are Bravo, i.e. local time off El Arish.

[7]"Noratlases Flew Patrol, Supply Missions," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 17 July 1967, pp. 89-91, 93, 96.

[8]Australia and Chile are two nations whose navies use systems virtually identical to that of the U.S. Navy, including large block numerals on both bow and stern. It was, however, unlikely that any Australian or Chilean warships would be in the Mediterranean that day.

[9]The American news media subsequently made much about messages to the *Liberty* being "misrouted," etc., but these accounts are terribly garbled and produce a substantial perversion of the truth. Given the time frame in which everything occurred, there is no way in which the "move off" message could have reached the *Liberty* before the attack except by way of high-precedence "flash," but there was no reason to use that precedence until after 1403 Bravo.

[10]One of the most remarkable aspects of the Israelis' "error" is that they jammed U.S. Navy communications frequencies, then claimed they thought they were attacking an Egyptian ship.

[11]Micha Limor, "Israeli Navy Man Describes Attack on the Liberty," *The New York Times*, 7 July 1967, p. 3.

[12]For editorial comment, see "Death on the Liberty," *The New York Times*, 10 June 1967, p. 32.

[13]"Sinking the Liberty: Accident or Design?" *Newsweek*, 19 June 1967, p. 21.

[14]*U.S. Department of State Bulletin*, 17 June 1968, p. 799.

[15]"Honor Medal Awarded To Skipper of Liberty," *Navy Times*, 26 June 1968, p. 2. "Hero Travels To Give Medal," *Navy Times*, 31 July 1968, p. 2.

[16]*U.S. Department of State Bulletin*, 2 June 1969, p. 475.

[17]"Damage to Ship Described, "*The Evening Star* (Washington), 16 June 1967, p. A-3.

[18]Hamilton Darby Perry, *The Panay Incident: Prelude to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 195-196, 220-222, 233.

[19]Reprinted in Henry Steele Commager, editor, *Documents of American History*, 6th edition (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1958), pp. 169-175.

Liberty's medical officer, explained it:

> "The commanding officer at that time was like a rock upon which the rest of the men supported themselves. To know that he was on the bridge grievously wounded, yet having the conn and the helm and through the night calling every change of course, was the thing that told the [wounded] 'we're going to live.' When I went to the bridge and I saw this, I should say that I knew that I could only insult this man by suggesting that he be taken below for treatment of his wounds. I didn't even suggest it."

At 0700 on 9 June, the *Liberty* rendezvoused with the destroyer *Davis* (DD-937), and shortly thereafter the *America* appeared on the scene. After spending 18 hours on his bridge, Commander McGonagle finally went below.

The *Liberty*'s scores of wounded were shuttled to the *America* by helicopter, and the most critically wounded were flown off the carrier by C-1A Trader logistics planes to Athens for further air transport to the naval hospital in Naples. Commander McGonagle was not among them. He remained on board his ship until she was dry-docked in Malta, and it was he who took the *Liberty* home to Pier 17 at the amphibious base, Little Creek, Virginia, where she moored on 29 July.

During the action of 8 June, the *Liberty*'s crew was certain that their attackers were from one of the Arab states. At that time, the relations between the Arab states and the United States were at a desperate low, and during the Six-Day War diplomatic relations were ruptured. However, for all the men of the *Liberty* knew, World War III had begun. When they discovered that their attackers were in fact Israelis—ostensible friends—they were baffled, then angry, and finally bitter. And through the bitterness of more than ten years has been asked, *"Why?"*

Israel claimed that the 10,000-ton, 459-foot *Liberty* was mistaken for the ancient Egyptian troopship *El Quseir* of 2,640 tons, 275 feet long, and which had a radically different deck plan and silhouette. Indeed, it is likely that the Israelis just picked out the Egyptian ship which most resembled the *Liberty*, even though this was a remarkable exercise in imagination. And the Israelis attempted to make much out of the allegation that the *Liberty* was not flying a flag, which was nonsense—until the Super-Mystères shot it away.

Most knowledgeable persons wondered how the unmistakable silhouette of the ubiquitous Victory ship, not to mention the *Liberty*'s unusual antenna arrays, did not make for immediate recognition.[12] These elementary factors led some American news media to speculate immediately that the attack may have been deliberate.[13] The U.S. Government accepted Israel's apology. The Israeli explanation was rejected. On 27 May 1968, Israel paid $3,325,500 in compensation to the next of kin of the 34 men killed.[14]

Two weeks later, in a muted ceremony in the Washington Navy Yard, Secretary of the Navy Paul Ignatius decorated Captain William L. McGonagle (promoted since the attack) with the Medal of Honor. By then, Captain McGonagle was prospective commanding officer of the new ammunition ship *Kilauea* (AE-26) which was on the eve of her commissioning. And a few days later in Norfolk, the Silver Star was awarded to Lieutenant Maurice H. Bennett, who had taken over as the ship's communications officer and labored below decks during the attack, and to Ensign David G. Lucas who had functioned as executive officer, operations officer, officer of the deck, quartermaster of the watch, lookout, messenger, and hospital corpsman during the attack.

Engineering personnel are often overlooked when decorations are awarded, but not on board the *Liberty*. The Silver Star was awarded to Lieutenant George Golden and to Chief Machinist's Mate Richard J. Brooks, the latter being in charge of the engineering watch during the action. In spite of dreadful circumstances in the machinery spaces, these men kept the "heart of the ship" in working order, and thus held the *Liberty*'s survival in the realm of possibility.

Lieutenant Richard F. Kiepfer, the medical officer, was also awarded the Silver Star. The fact that 170 Purple Hearts were awarded among the *Liberty*'s complement provides an idea of the problems faced by Dr. Kiepfer and his two corpsmen. Other decorations were awarded, two of them posthumously. Captain McGonagle himself traveled to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to present the Bronze Star to Virgil L. Brownfield, who had been his telephone talker on the bridge during the attacks.[15]

As for the *Liberty*, her only unusual aspect was the extraordinary communications equipment in her Number 3 hold, most of which was especially manufactured for her mission. And it was destroyed by the Israeli torpedo. The *Liberty* could not be economically repaired, and on 28 June 1968 she was decommissioned. The officer who closed out her log was David Lucas. In December 1970, the Navy turned the *Liberty* over to the Maritime Administration, and she was sold to a ship breaker for $101,666.66. Towed away to Baltimore's Curtis Bay, she was finally reduced to scrap in 1973.

In the meantime, on 28 April 1969, 22 months